FROM THE BOOKSHELF #125 JANUARY 27, 1976
ROGER LYONS

ABRAHAM LINCOLN: HIS STORY IN HIS OWN WORDS,
EDITED BY RALPH NEWMAN

ANNCR: THE VOICE OF AMERICA BRINGS YOU NOW ANOTHER IN THE WEEKLY SERIES FROM THE BOOKSHELF...A SERIES IN WHICH WE REVIEW SOME OF THE MANY BOOKS AMERICANS ARE CURRENTLY READING. IN A COMMEMORATION OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY ON FEBRUARY TWELFTH, VOA'S BOOK EDITOR _____ BRINGS YOU ROGER LYONS REVIEW OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN: HIS STORY IN HIS OWN WORDS, EDITED BY RALPH NEWMAN AND PUBLISHED BY DOUBLEDAY. HERE NOW IS _____.

EDITOR: READING THIS SLIM, LOVINGLY PUT-TOGETHER VOLUME, IT IS A CONSTANT SOURCE OF AMAZEMENT THAT THIS MAN, BORN IN POVERTY OF UNEDUCATED PARENTS, COULD HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE SOME OF ITS MOST MAGNIFICENT PROSE. "I NOW THINK," ABRAHAM LINCOLN WROTE IN AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH PREPARED FOR USE IN THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN WHICH WON HIM THE PRESIDENCY, "THAT THE AGGREGATE OF ALL MY SCHOOLING DID NOT AMOUNT TO ONE YEAR. I WAS NEVER IN COLLEGE OR ACADEMY AS A STUDENT; AND NEVER INSIDE A COLLEGE OR ACADEMY BUILDING TILL... I HAD A LAW LICENSE. AFTER I HAD SEPARATED FROM MY FATHER, I STUDIED ENGLISH GRAMMAR, IMPERFECTLY OF COURSE, BUT SO AS TO SPEAK AND WRITE AS I NOW DO. I STUDIED AND NEARLY MASTERED THE SIX BOOKS OF EUCLID, SINCE I WAS A MEMBER OF CONGRESS. I REGRET MY WANT OF EDUCATION, AND DO WHAT I CAN TO SUPPLY THE WANT."

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EDITOR: (CONT) ONLY THE SIMPLICITY OF THE MAN CAN ACCOUNT FOR THE SPARE AND UNSENTIMENTAL DIRECTNESS OF HIS WORDS. WHEN HE RAN UNSUCCESSFULLY FOR SENATOR FROM ILLINOIS TWO YEARS BEFORE HE WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT, LINCOLN DESCRIBED HIS OWN APPEARANCE FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE VOTERS. THIS WAS NECESSARY IN A DAY WHEN PHOTOGRAPHY HAD NOT YET BECOME A MEDIUM AVAILABLE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC. THESE WERE HIS WORDS: "IF ANY PERSONAL DESCRIPTION OF ME IS THOUGHT DESIRABLE, IT MAY BE SAID, I AM, IN HEIGHT, SIX FEET FOUR INCHES, NEARLY; (SIX CENTIMETERS LESS THAN TWO METERS) LEAN IN FLESH, WEIGHING ON AN AVERAGE, ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY POUNDS; (JUST UNDER EIGHTY-ONE KILOS) DARK COMPLEXION, WITH COURSE BLACK HAIR, AND GREY EYES -- NO OTHER MARKS OR BRANDS RECOLLECTED." SUCH A DESCRIPTION COULD JUST AS WELL HAVE BEEN USED IN A POLICE BLOTTER.

NOWHERE IN HIS WRITING IS THERE THE SLIGHTEST HINT OF SELF-INFLATION. THE TONE, RATHER, IS SELF-DEPRECATION. AT NO POINT, HOWEVER, DOES ONE FEEL THAT THIS MODESTY AND LACK OF ADORNMENT IS PUT ON. THEY EMERGE AS INNATE QUALITIES OF A MAN WITH AN UNUSUAL GIFT FOR OBJECTIVE AND DISPASSIONATE OBSERVATION OF HIMSELF AND THE WORLD -- A GIFT WHICH DEVELOPED AS HE TRAINED HIMSELF TO BE A LAWYER AND TO PRACTICE HIS PROFESSION. THE APPLICATION OF THIS POWER OF OBSERVATION TO THE FRAILTIES OF HUMAN NATURE, HIS OWN INCLUDED, COMES OUT IN LINCOLN'S CHARACTERISTIC SENSE OF HUMOR AND ALSO IN THE OVERTONE OF SADNESS WHICH PERVADES HIS LIFE.

EDITOR: (CONT) WHILE SEEKING THE REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION, LINCOLN, IN A LETTER TO A SENATOR, REFERRED TO HIS AMBITION: "I WILL BE ENTIRELY FRANK," HE WROTE, "THE TASTE IS IN MY MOUTH A LITTLE; AND THIS NO DOUBT, DISQUALIFIES ME, TO SOME EXTENT, TO FORM CORRECT OPINIONS." HOW MANY POLITICIANS IN THIS DAY AND AGE COULD PROFIT FROM SUCH SELF-REFLECTION?

LINCOLN MADE NO SPEECHES DURING THE CAMPAIGN, BUT AS SOON AS HE WAS ELECTED, HE BROKE HIS SILENCE AND EVEN BEFORE HIS INAUGURATION FOUR MONTHS LATER, HE MADE DOZENS OF SPEECHES. THEY WERE MARKED BY A THEME HE EXPRESSED ALL HIS LIFE, THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUALITY. IN PHILADELPHIA AT INDEPENDENCE HALL, HE STRESSED THE FUNDAMENTAL CHARACTER OF THIS IDEA THAT, IN HIS WORDS, "ALL SHOULD HAVE AN EQUAL CHANCE." IT WAS THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUALITY, HE SAID, THAT HELD THIS CONFEDERACY (UNION OF STATES) SO LONG TOGETHER...GIVING LIBERTY, NOT ONLY TO THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY, BUT HOPE TO THE WORLD FOR ALL FUTURE TIME." "NOW, MY FRIENDS," HE QUERIED HIS AUDIENCE IN OMINOUSLY PROPHETIC WORDS, "CAN THIS COUNTRY BE SAVED UPON THAT BASIS? IF IT CAN, I WILL CONSIDER MYSELF ONE OF THE HAPPIEST MEN IN THE WORLD IF I CAN SAVE IT. IF IT CAN'T BE SAVED UPON THAT PRINCIPLE, IT WILL BE TRULY AWFUL. BUT, IF THIS COUNTRY CANNOT BE SAVED WITHOUT GIVING UP THAT PRINCIPLE -- I WAS ABOUT TO SAY I WOULD RATHER BE ASSASSINATED ON THIS SPOT THAN TO SURRENDER IT."

EDITOR: (CONT) IT WAS THE ANGUISH CAUSED BY THE SUFFERING OF HIS BELOVED COUNTRY, WHICH HE LED THROUGH FOUR YEARS OF BLOODY CIVIL STRIFE, THAT BROUGHT TO FRUITION THE FULL GENIUS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND TESTED THE DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES FOR WHICH HE STOOD. SINCE THEN, HIS WORDS AND DEEDS HAVE INSPIRED MILLIONS OF PEOPLE ALL OVER THE WORLD. IN THIS BICENTENNIAL YEAR, AS AMERICANS TRY TO ACHIEVE SOME PERSPECTIVE ON THE HERITAGE WHICH THEY PROFESS, NOTHING COULD BE MORE PROFITABLE THAN TO CONTEMPLATE THE EXPRESSIONS OF LINCOLN'S FAITH IN THE FREEDOM AND RIGHTS OF ALL PEOPLE, THE MEEK AND THE GREAT, THE POWERFUL AND THE POOR.

IN NOVEMBER, 1864, LINCOLN WAS RE-ELECTED BY AN AMPLE POPULAR MAJORITY. HIS SECOND INAUGURAL ADDRESS WAS LESS THAN FIVE MINUTES LONG. HE ENDED HIS TALK WITH THE UNFORGETTABLE WORDS THAT STILL HOLD US TODAY AS THEY DID ON THE DAY THEY WERE UTTERED: "WITH MALICE TOWARD NONE; WITH CHARITY FOR ALL; WITH FIRMNESS IN THE RIGHT, AS GOD GIVES US TO SEE THE RIGHT, LET US STRIVE ON TO FINISH THE WORK WE ARE IN; TO BIND UP THE NATION'S WOUNDS; TO CARE FOR HIM WHO SHALL HAVE BORNE THE BATTLE, AND FOR HIS WIDOW, AND HIS ORPHAN -- TO DO ALL WHICH MAY ACHIEVE AND CHERISH A JUST AND LASTING PEACE, AMONG OURSELVES, AND WITH ALL NATIONS."

ANNCR: YOU HAVE BEEN LISTENING TO OUR WEEKLY PROGRAM <u>FROM THE BOOKSHELF</u>. TODAY, IN HONOR OF LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY ON FEBRUARY TWELFTH, WE HAVE REVIEWED ABRAHAM LINCOLN: <u>HIS</u>

ANNCR: (CONT) STORY IN HIS OWN WORDS, EDITED BY RALPH NEWMAN. JOIN US AGAIN NEXT WEEK (AT THIS TIME) FOR ANOTHER SELECTION FROM THE BOOKSHELF.

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